

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 SP-02 ICA-11 AID-05 EB-08
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TO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 204796

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:

SUBJECT: MALAYSIAN DEL REACTIONS TO ASEAN MEETING

1. WE BELIEVE MALAYSIAN ASEAN DEL DEPARTED WASHINGTON
BASICALLY SATISFIED WITH FORM AND CONTENT OF THE DIALOGUE
AND SOMEWHAT ENCOURAGED (BUT CERTAINLY NOT OPTIMISTIC) FOR
THE FUTURE. THESE ATTITUDES ARE A MAJOR IMPROVEMENT FROM
THE CONSISTENT THEME OF SKEPTICISM WHICH PERVADED THE GOM
BEFORE THE MEETING AND WERE EVIDENT EVEN DURING AMB ZAIN'S
CONSTRUCTIVE EFFORTS TO COORDINATE HIS COLLEAGUES OF THE
ASEAN WASHINGTON COMMITTEE ON ARRANGEMENTS. (AT THE END,
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ZAIN GAVE US A "B PLUS" WHICH IN HIS LEXICON IS RELATIVELY
HIGH PRAISE).

2. THE MAJOR SUBSTANTIVE ELEMENT WHICH SHOULD ENABLE THE
GOM TO PORTRAY THE MEETING AS A SUCCESS ARE THE USG STATE-
MENTS TO SEEK AGREEMENT ON A COMMON FUND. FONMIN
RITHAUDDEEN SPOKE ARTICULATLY AND WELL ON COMMODITIES

IN PLENARY AS WELL AS SMALLER SESSIONS. DURING THE MEETINGS, THE COMBINATION OF INFORMALITY AND OBVIOUS US RESPECT FOR ASEAN LEADERS PLUS THE SHEER WEIGHT OF US CABINET MEMBERS APPARENTLY HAD A CUMULATIVE EFFECT ON MALAYSIAN PERCEPTIONS. THE POSITIVE ATTITUDES OF THE PHILIPPINE AND SINGAPOREAN MINISTERS WERE PROBABLY ALSO HAVING AN IMPACT.

3. WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE SOMEWHAT UNPRECEDENTED EFFORTS BY EA TO MOBILIZE OFFICER SUPPORT FOR AIRPORT RECEPTIONS, CONFERENCE ESCORT, AND ENSURING THAT RANKING ASEAN DEL MEMBERS GOT DIRECTED TO THEIR MOST REWARDING US COUNTERPARTS AT SOCIAL EVENTS WAS EFFECTIVE -- PERHAPS PARTICULARLY SO FOR THE STATUS-CONSCIOUS MALAYSIANS. MALAYSIANS WERE ALSO ONE OF ONLY TWO DELS (OTHER WAS PHILIPPINES) RECEIVING SECURITY COVERAGE. PRIOR THE MEETING, GOM REPS VOICED DISPLEASURE WITH ADMIN ARRANGEMENTS AND SUBSTANCE; AFTER THE FIRST DAY, THE SKEPTICISM BEGAN TO ERODE AND THEY NOTED CONFERENCE WAS GOING "MUCH, MUCH BETTER" THAN THEY EXPECTED. THUS, BY END OF MEETING MALAYSIANS SEEMED CONTENT. HOWEVER, THEY WERE UNWILLING TO FULLY ENDORSE THE RESULTS STATING THEY WOULD AWAIT FULL REVIEW OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE MAKING A FINAL ASSESSMENT (OR HAVING ANY VIEWS ON TIMING AND LEVEL OF NEXT MEETING).

4. AS REPORTED SEPTTEL ON THAI DEL, FONMIN RITHAUDDEEN (ALONG WITH FONMIN UPPADIT) TOOK SPECIAL EFFORT AT OUR CONFIDENTIAL

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SUGGESTION TO MEET WITH CONG. EILBERG ON REFUGEES.

5. ON AUGUST 2 RITHAUDDEEN HIS SPECIAL ASSISTANT KAREM AND AMBASSADOR ZAIN HAD LUNCH WITH A/S HOLBROOKE AND DAS OAKLEY AT WHICH WE DISCUSSED THE OUTLINES OF THE SESSION AHEAD AND EXCHANGED VIEWS ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOSIA AND THE EVOLVING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN VIETNAM, CAMBODIA AND THEIR NEIGHBORS (INCLUDING THE PRC). RITHAUDDEEN ALSO DESCRIBED SOME OF HIS EXPERIENCES AND OBSERVATIONS AT THE BELGRADE NAM, INCLUDING HIS BEING IN THE CHAIR WHEN THE CAMBODIAN DELEGATE MOVED TO EXPEL THE VIETNAMESE AND THE LATTER COUNTERATTACHED. THIS ESTABLISHED A PERSONAL CONTACT WHICH WAS USEFUL THROUGHOUT. KAREM WAS VISITING THE UNITED STATES FOR THE FIRST TIME AND WAS UNSURE WHAT TO EXPECT. AT THE END HE WAS VERY PLEASED BOTH WITH THE MEETING AND WITH WHAT HE HAD SEEN AND HEARD, ON A PERSONAL AND DIPLOMATIC BASIS. HE APPEARS TO BE A VERY BRIGHT, RECEPTIVE POLITICAL OBSERVER AND RITHAUDDEEN WENT NOWHERE WITHOUT HIM.

6. FOLLOW-UP: MAINTAINING A MOMENTUM IN US-ASEAN RELATIONS WILL REQUIRE THE ON-GOING PRIORITY ATTENTION OF

THE DEPT AND POSTS (INCLUDING THE AMBASSADOR). OUR INTEREST AND EFFORTS CANNOT SUCCEED, OF COURSE, UNLESS THERE IS COMPARABLE ATTENTION BY RESPONSIBLE LEVELS OF ASEAN. IT WOULD BE A MISFORTUNE FOR EXAMPLE, TO AGAIN BE FACED WITH THE ASEAN DELAY WHICH PREVENTED THE WORKING GROUP ON DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FROM MEETING UNTIL TEN MONTHS AFTER THE 1977 MANILA MEETING.

7. IN THE CASE OF MALAYSIA, WE HOPE THAT THE IMPROVED GOM ATTITUDE ON US-ASEAN RELATIONS CAN BE MAINTAINED. WE RECOGNIZE THAT PROGRESS ON THE COMMON FUND IS PROBABLY THE CARDINAL ELEMENT IN GOM PERCEPTIONS. NEVERTHELESS, WE THINK FONMIN RITHAUDDEEN PERFORMED VERY WELL IN WASHINGTON AND THAT HE WAS IMPRESSED BY ACCESS AND ATTENTION.
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TION. HE MAY THUS BE MORE DISPOSED TO ACTIVE COOPERATION THAN PREVIOUSLY. IN AN EFFORT TO SUPPORT THE NEW RELATIONSHIP, THE SECRETARY WILL BE SENDING A WARM LETTER OF APPRECIATION IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND DICK HOLBROOKE IS SENDING A MORE PERSONAL MESSAGE. OPIC PRES. RUDD POATS HAS AGREED (SEPTEL) TO EMBASSY KL'S EXCELLENT SUGGESTION THAT HE HOST LUNCHEON IN NEW YORK FOR VISITING DPM MAHITHIR.
CHRISTOPHER

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